

21 July 2004

**RE: COMMENTS REGARDING TV CAPTIONING**

The 1996 Telecom Act mandates 100% closed captioning by 2006. Without concerted action we will fall far short of the mandated level as there are far too few captioners today, and little emphasis on expanded training of captioners.

I fear this sets the stage for an excuse to let the industry off the hook on the mandate of Telecom 1996.

I am a Vietnam veteran, profoundly hard of hearing as a result of combat injuries. I am a member of the national advocacy organization Self Help for Hard of Hearing (SHHH) and a board member of the Washington State branch of SHHH.

Even with use of powerful digital FM hearing aids received from the VA, I must gather visual cues to fully understand speech content, so am dependent upon captioning of television, in public meetings and in airline terminals. I use speech reading to supplement understanding in face-to-face meetings.

I am not alone in depending upon captioning, there are more baby boomers (aged 45-64) with hearing loss (10-million) than there are people over age 65 with a hearing loss (9-million). In total, 28-million Americans are hearing impaired.

Captioning is not just of benefit to the deaf and hard of hearing, nearly 100-million other Americans benefit from closed captioning; those for whom English is a second language, those enrolled in literacy programs, children learning to read, and residents of group living facilities.

I urge the FCC to advocate for TV captioning and to seek assistance from congress to fund the training to more captioners.

Sincerely,

George Cooper